Resuming dialogue with Pakistan

483. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister has declared his intention to resume the process of dialogue in a bid to solve the outstanding issues between India and Pakistan;

(b) if so, the details of the declaration and the reaction of the Pakistan Government thereto;

(c) whether Government have drawn up any solution for resolving the vexed Kashmir issue pending for more than the last 50 years;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) by when the first meeting is likely to be held with Pakistani leaders?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) On April 18, 2003, Prime Minister had once again extended the hand of friendship to Pakistan. In his statement in Parliament on May 2, he said that conducive environment for a sustained dialogue necessarily required an end to cross-border infiltration and dismantling of the infrastructure of support to terrorism. He emphasised that progress on economic cooperation, cultural exchanges and people to people contacts would create an environment for addressing the difficult issues in India Pakistan bilateral relations. In this context he announced the decision to appoint a High Commissioner to Pakistan and to restore civil aviation links on a reciprocal basis. Subsequently, on May 26, Government announced willingness to resume the Delhi-Lahore bus service.

Following Prime Minister's initiative both countries have appointed High Commissioners. The Delhi-Lahore bus service has been resumed with effect from July 11. Pakistan has indicated willingness to host technical level discussions for resumption of civil aviation, although proposals for specific dates are still awaited. Both sides have released prisoners. There have also been important exchanges in the context of business, cultural and people-to-people contacts.

(c) and (d) The State of Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India and a part of its territory is under illegal occupation by Pakistan.

The issue that remains to be resolved is the vacation by Pakistan of the territory illegally occupied by it.

(e) India remains committed to discussing all outstanding issues with Pakistan through peaceful, bilateral dialogue in accordance with the Simla Agreement and the Lahore declaration. Successful implementation of the present step by step process for normalisation of links, and credible steps by Pakistan to end cross border terrorism on a permanent basis, would be necessary for creating an atmosphere conducive to sustained dialogue.

Discussion on Sikkim and McMohan Line with Chinese leaders

484. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether during his visit to China last month, the Prime Minister held discussions with the Chinese leaders on the question of Sikkim and McMohan Line;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the reaction of the Chinese leaders thereto; and

(c) if not, the reason therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) to (c) Following the understandings reached during Prime Minister's visit to China in June 2003, the process has been started by which Sikkim will cease to be an issue in India-China relations.

During Prime Minister's visit, the two sides exchanged views on the India-China boundary question and reiterated their readiness to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution through consultations on an equal footing. It was agreed that pending an ultimate solution, the two countries would work together to maintain peace and tranquility in their border areas, and continue to implement the agreements signed for this purpose, including the clarification of the Line of Actual Control. India and China also agreed to each appoint a Special Representative to explore from the political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship the framework of a boundary settlement.